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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MG SHAMNI REPRIMANDS KFIR BRIGADE COMMANDER FOR
CONDONING VIOLENCE AGAINST PALESTINIANS

Classified By: CDA Luis G. Moreno for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (SBU) MG Gadi Shamni, commander of the IDF Central Command, publicly reprimanded the commander of the West Bank's Kfir Brigade, Col. Itai Virov, on May 19 for statements Col. Virov made to a military court in which he defended the use of violence when detaining Palestinian suspects. (Note: The Kfir Brigade is the only IDF Brigade assigned full-time to the West Bank; other units rotate in and out.) Col. Virov made the statements while testifying on behalf of one of his subordinates, Lt. Adam Malul, who has been charged in a military court with beating a Palestinian during an arrest operation in the West Bank. In his testimony, Col. Virov defended Lt. Malul by saying that in the course of making arrests, "a slap, sometimes a blow to the back of the neck or chest, sometimes a knee-kick or stranglehold for the purpose of calming someone down, is reasonable." Regarding interrogations, Virov added, "Questioning is a relatively aggressive act. Sometimes there is shouting or pinning someone to the wall, sometimes there is no choice but to shake, pin, push. To say that questioning is done without any use of force would be feigning innocence." In his reprimand, communicated through the IDF Spokesperson's Office, MG Shamni stressed that Virov's statements "do not correspond with the 'Spirit of the IDF' (the IDF's ethical code) nor do they correspond with IDF regulations... safeguarding human dignity is a central value in the Central Command and the IDF."

¶2. (C) COMMENT: Col. Virov's comments reflect the norm for IDF soldiers operating in the West Bank. Undoubtedly Virov assumed in making them that he was just acknowledging facts that everyone knows but few admit publicly, and that in doing so he would be protected by the IDF command structure which also knows what happens in the territories and which also often prefers to "feign innocence." What is unusual about this case is that MG Shamni decided to take off the cloak and air the dirty laundry publicly. While it's not clear to us whether he did so because Virov crossed an unspoken line by putting his statements on the record, or whether Shamni has decided he truly wants to shake up the behavioral norms of soldiers in the West Bank, in either case the reprimand is a welcome reminder that operational expediency should not be allowed to overrule ethical behavior. It is also likely that recent USG pressure regarding the humane treatment of Palestinian civilians and detainees also played a role in Shamni's decision to make his reprimand public.

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